



Environmental Impact Statement for Vessel Quotas and Operating Requirements

SCOPING NEWSLETTER – JULY 2002

What We Heard from You...

This newsletter reports on continuing work with the Vessel Quotas and Operating Requirements Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve. It includes a summary of the results of public scoping and presents other project information of interest. The EIS will assess the effects of a range of alternatives for establishing motorized vessel quotas and associated operating requirements in Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve to respond to congressional direction and new operational needs since 1996.

Scoping is "...an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action."

—Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)
regulations 40 CFR Part 1501.7

A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

I am gratified to have received so many thoughtful comments and helpful suggestions about the scope of this EIS—ideas about the alternatives and significant issues we should examine in this document. If you contributed to this effort by participating in one of the seven public scoping meetings or other meetings, or by communicating with us through written comments or by telephone, I sincerely thank you. We are considering every comment we received. Your comments are helping us develop an EIS that is complete, factual, and focused. We hope this newsletter summarizes your ideas accurately, highlights the significant issues relevant to this EIS and communicates useful information about the project.

Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve is a national gem, one we all have interest in protecting. And, it is essential we continue to provide our diverse visiting public with high-quality opportunities to explore and experience Glacier Bay. By January 2004, the National Park Service (NPS) will make a decision regarding vessel management in Glacier Bay. That decision will address both interests—protection and visitor opportunities. It must be thoughtful, logical and rooted in the reasons for which Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve was created. The information and analysis in the EIS will figure critically in that decision.

Again, thank you for your contributions to date and for your interest in Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve. I encourage your continuing involvement during the EIS process and look forward to your feedback on the Draft EIS when it becomes available for public review in early 2003.

—Tomie Lee, Superintendent

"...we will manage uses to provide a unique, inspirational visitor experience while protecting the park's marine, glacial and terrestrial ecosystems..."

—Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve Mission Statement





Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve

SCOPING ACTIVITIES

Scoping is an early phase of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and is used to determine the breadth and depth of an environmental analysis. Congress signed NEPA into law in 1970. NEPA requires federal agencies to give appropriate consideration to environmental factors in all their decision-making processes. NPS is using scoping to determine the:

- significant issues to be addressed;
- depth of the analysis;
- alternatives to be assessed; and
- the potential environmental and socioeconomic effects of the various alternatives.

The scoping period began on February 22, 2002, with publication of the Notice of Intent to Prepare an EIS in the *Federal Register*. Comments were requested by June 7, 2002. During the scoping period, NPS published a brochure with a comment form and, provided an electronic version of both on the park website. We also hosted public meetings from May 20, through May 30, 2002 in the Alaska communities of Hoonah, Gustavus, Pelican, Elfin Cove, Anchorage, and Juneau, and a meeting in Seattle, Washington. At the meetings, participants could review displays, maps, and literature and speak directly with members of the EIS project team. We provided an overview of the project, followed by an opportunity for comments and questions.

We held internal scoping meetings at park headquarters on April 19 and

May 9, 2002. The EIS project team met with representatives from the U.S. Geological Survey, Alaska Science Center on May 9; a representative from the National Marine Fisheries Service on May 29; and with representatives from several State of Alaska agencies on May 15 and 28.

Preliminary Alternatives Presented by NPS during Scoping

NPS presented three preliminary action alternatives and one no action alternative in the scoping brochure and during the scoping meetings. They are:

Alternative 1 – would set vessel quotas and operating requirements in accordance with the 1985 regulations and park compendium. *[2 cruise ships per day, 107 entries per season]*

Alternative 2 – (no action) would maintain vessel quotas and operating requirements at the current levels (1996 levels, but no additional increases for cruise ships would be authorized). *[2 cruise ships per day, 139 entries per season]*

Alternative 3 – (proposed action) would set vessel quotas and operating requirements in accordance with the 1996 regulations (additional increases for cruise ships could be authorized). *[2 cruise ships per day, up to 184 entries per season]*

Alternative 4 – would set vessel quotas and operating requirements at levels higher than those set out in the 1996 regulations.

ISSUES RAISED DURING THE SCOPING PROCESS

Federal and state agency representatives, tribal representatives, environmental groups, the tourism industry, and private citizens identified a wide range of issues and topics. We will address the significant issues relevant to vessel quotas and operating requirements in the EIS.

Most scoping comments we received addressed vessel quota issues and the possible effects of increased numbers of vessels in Glacier Bay. Many people expressed concerns regarding the effects on wildlife and park visitors from vessel noise; the effects on the visitor experience from increased numbers of vessels visible in Glacier Bay; the decrease of air and water quality from the increase in vessel emissions and sanitation and operation discharges; increased disturbance to wildlife resulting from increased numbers of vessels; and the effects on vessel safety, including vessel speed restrictions and maneuverability, increased risk of vessel/marine mammal collisions, vessel/vessel collisions, the potential for vessels running aground, and emergency spill response, resulting from increased vessel traffic.

Several commenters asked that the EIS consider more access permits for tour boats, charter boats, and private boats, to benefit local economies that have been affected by the commercial fishing phase-out. Others expressed frustrations that their communities do not benefit economically from the cruise industry. Several people wanted public access via a designated corridor through Glacier Bay to the Bartlett Cove Dock and others suggested that access remain restricted. Some commenters felt the NPS website was difficult to find and use. One commenter felt that advertising for public meetings in Juneau was insufficient. Another commenter suggested that the EIS clearly define the vessel types that are being evaluated and that vessels outside the parameters specified should not be addressed in the EIS. Several commenters expressed a desire to conduct subsistence harvests of sea otters, seal, and sea gull eggs within the park boundaries.

Below is a summary of suggestions for alternatives, as well as for impact topics and issues resulting from scoping. A scoping report containing a comprehensive list and a more detailed discussion of scoping results will be available on our website at <http://www.nps.gov/glba>.

Alternatives

NPS should consider the following in the EIS:

- revising the regulations to make them easier to understand, follow, and enforce;
- reestablishing vessel quotas from 1970;
- retaining restrictions on wilderness and non-motorized waters and speed restrictions at the lower reaches of Glacier Bay, because this is an important feeding area for humpback whales;
- extending the vessel quotas and operating requirements to the shoulder season months of May and September;
- setting the cruise ship vessel quota at 92 for the season (June through August) or an average of one per day;
- only allowing small vessels in Glacier Bay;
- limiting use of park administrative and research vessels;
- increasing the number of scientific research vessels to analyze the effects of damage to park resources;
- providing local Native Alaskans with self-regulated, traditional use of the park;
- providing a “permit free” public access corridor to Bartlett Cove;
- establishing commercial activity-free zones;
- requiring maximum technology available to control stack emissions;
- reclassifying vessel types, because effects are different between a 75-foot yacht and a small skiff, even though both may be private boats;
- tailoring operating requirements to the size and capacity of each type of vessel;
- determining which vessel speed is applicable—through water or over ground;
- expanding the whale waters at the Marble Islands and extending whale waters from the southern park boundary to the eastern tip of Lemesurier Island and the western tip of Pleasant Island;
- adjusting the whale waters boundary at the mouth of Glacier Bay to the whale waters at the south end of Lester Island and across Ripple Cove to provide for public access to the Bartlett Cove Dock;
- increasing pollution minimization requirements to decrease discharges to the air and improve air quality;
- widening the range of alternatives beyond those presented during scoping (i.e., preliminary alternatives);
- requiring visitors and staff to view a short video presentation of the park’s rules as a way to improve safety in the park.
- limiting commercial traffic into Dundas and Taylor Bays; and
- defining specific routes in order to reduce the possibility of grounding, collisions with rocks, and the potential for oil spills in ice-filled waters.

One alternative should allow no further vessel increases.

One alternative should consider not allowing vessels in Glacier Bay.

The no action alternative should be the 1985 vessel quotas, i.e., 107 cruise ship entries.

Completed to date



Notice of Intent
February 22, 2002

(On May 6, 2002 the public comment period was extended to June 7, 2002)



Scoping Meetings
April – June 2002



Preparation of Draft EIS
June 2002 – February 2003

Draft EIS



Notice of Availability
February 2003



Public Hearings
Winter/Spring 2003

60-Day Comment Period

Final EIS



Notice of Availability
Fall 2003



30-Day No Action Period



Record of Decision
Fall 2003

THE EIS PROCESS

Marine Mammals

Increases in vessel traffic could result in increased whale/vessel collisions and whale mortality or injury could result from such collisions.

The sight and noise of vessel traffic alters marine mammal behavior; therefore, any increase in the number of vessels would further disrupt marine mammal behavior.

Since whales feed in Bartlett Cove, operating requirements should be developed to protect whales in this area.

Vessel wakes could swamp, disturb, or displace harbor seals and their pups resting on glacial ice or cause onshore waves that startle sleeping humpback whales.



Marine Birds

The presence of vessels in the marine environment alters marine bird behavior, specifically Harlequin ducks in Dundas Bay.

Waves from vessel wakes could swamp marine bird nests that are in low-lying areas, thus reducing reproductive success and altering marine bird feeding behavior.

Private and charter boats that offload visitors onshore could disturb bird colonies, specifically at McBride Glacier, as well as nesting arctic terns and mew gulls in other breeding locations, thus reducing reproductive success.

Other Marine Fauna and Flora

Airborne contaminants emitted from ship stacks could be deposited in the marine environment and enter the marine food chain through ingestion or dermal contact.

The presence of artificial light from vessels could alter the behavior of marine fauna. Increases in artificial light would compound this effect.

Increases in vessel quotas increase the potential for unauthorized releases of ballast water that could introduce foreign species into the marine environment. Exotic species that may be on the hulls of cruise ships could be introduced into the marine ecosystem and have unknown effects.

Waves generated from vessel wakes and prop wash could change the turbidity in the intertidal environment, a situation that could affect the feeding of benthic invertebrates and other members of the intertidal community.

Changing levels of underwater noise could alter fish behavior, including feeding, resting, traveling, distribution, and communication.

Coastal/Shoreline Habitat

Waves generated from vessel wakes could disturb and change the composition of the intertidal community. Waves could alter the behavior of terrestrial mammals that feed, roam, or sleep on the shoreline. Waves generated from vessels also could erode portions of the shoreline.

Traffic at popular drop-off locations could be changed, resulting in increased physical disturbances, including creation of trails and fire rings, and disturbance of intertidal communities.

Cultural Resources

Air and water pollution could defile sacred elements of Glacier Bay, including the glaciers, mountain goats, and seals.

Effects on harbor seals could change opportunities for traditional seal hunting.

Waves generated from vessels could erode portions of the shoreline, thus changing the geological composition of the shoreline, and possibly exposing anthropological and archaeological resources present in interstadial geologic layers, including preglacial forests.

Increase in traffic at popular drop-off locations could increase physical disturbances and potential vandalism of anthropological resources.

Local and Regional Socioeconomics

Increasing the vessel quota for private and charter boats and providing access to Dundas and Taylor Bays could improve local economies and lifestyles. Revenues generated from local wildlife viewing and sightseeing charter and tour boats could replace loss of livelihood resulting from the Glacier Bay commercial fishing phase-out.

Increasing the number of permits allocated to local owners and operators could benefit the local economy, but the number of vessel entries should not increase.

To assist local economies, local communities should be given access to rivers that flow into Glacier Bay.

Increasing the vessel quota for tour boats could benefit the economy of local communities by providing additional entries to local operators. Increased restrictions on local resident access could have detrimental effects to local economies.

Increasing the vessel quota for private, locally based boats would benefit inn and lodge operators by increasing their access to Glacier, Dundas, and Taylor Bays for their guests.

Operating requirements could be crafted to provide beneficial effects to the local communities by providing educational opportunities or by training local residents to be first responders for oil spills or by providing opportunities to benefit the local economies.

Wilderness Resources

An increase in vessel quotas could allow more people to experience a wilderness area intimately. In addition, wilderness would be more accessible.

An increase in vessel quotas could diminish the value of wilderness by increasing the sense of crowdedness.

The presence of large vessels could diminish the wilderness values.

Increases in off-vessel activity could result in more trash and degradation of the terrestrial environment.

Visitor Experience

The presence of large cruise ships could diminish the experience of visitors from smaller boats due to the visual effects and loss of wilderness experience.

Vessel noise could intrude on visitor solitude in Glacier Bay.

The presence of vessels may provide a backcountry user with a greater sense of security knowing that help is nearby if an emergency occurs.

The presence of vessels may scare wildlife and thereby could diminish the visitor experience of those expecting to see wildlife.

Air Quality

Increases in vessel quotas would increase the particulate and pollutant load entering the air column and have a detrimental effect on air quality by increasing, thus changing the air quality, visibility, and the presence of haze.

Increases in vessel quotas would increase the discharge of carbon dioxide that could affect global warming.

Increases in vessel quotas would increase the stack emissions and could result in detrimental effects to human health and the environment.

Water Quality

Vessels other than large cruise ships may not have the capacity to hold and treat waste. Possible increases in these types of vessels could result in increased discharges of waste, resulting in degradation of the marine environment.

Increasing the vessel quota increases the potential of small and catastrophic oil spills. Current technology is inadequate to clean up oil spills in ice-filled waters.

Increases in vessel quotas increase the potential for unauthorized releases of marine debris, petroleum, graywater, blackwater, oil, ballast, photographic chemicals, dry cleaning solutions, and cleaning solutions. The unauthorized release of marine debris could harm the ecosystem and imperil boaters.



Vessel Traffic and Safety

Increasing vessels or vessel speed would increase the risk of vessel-vessel and vessel-marine mammal collisions.

The 10-knot vessel speed restriction limits the maneuverability of large vessels, but would decrease the risk of vessel-whale collisions.

The 10-knot speed limit in whale waters should be retained and a 14-knot vessel speed restriction should be instituted in non-whale waters to protect whales transiting throughout the park.

Smaller boats are more maneuverable than larger boats and should be allowed to travel at faster speeds because they could avoid most potential hazards.

Waves generated from larger vessels could swamp kayakers or small boats on the water. Additionally, these waves could swamp landed kayakers and small boats.

All vessels are vulnerable in ice-filled waters. Protocols should be developed to limit the possibility of accidents and reduce the possible incidence of oil spills in ice-filled waters.

Increasing fines for non-compliance of regulations, for example excess emissions, could decrease the incidence of regulations violations and increase safety throughout the park.

Increasing the user friendliness of the operating requirements could increase the possibility that vessel operators would adhere to the rules and decrease the possibility of accidents.

Cumulative Effects

NEPA mandates that agencies look at all potential impacts, including those considered cumulative, as defined in CEQ § 1508.7. A cumulative effect is the effect on the environment that results from the incremental impact of the action when added to the other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Cumulative effects can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time. Suggestions raised during scoping regarding actions/conditions that we should consider in analyzing cumulative effects include:

- Commercial fishing is being phased out of the park, but will continue until all of the current permit holders cease to fish.
- Flightseeing is a current visitor activity. The Tongass National Forest's flightseeing plan is under review and may result in alterations in the number of flights over the park. Any changes to the United States Forest Service Tongass National Forest management plan may have effects on the park.
- There is a leveling out of tourism in southeast Alaska, and there are fewer independent travelers coming to the park. These conditions may alter demand and the type of visitor experience preferred.
- Changes in the overall economy may change the level of tourism and demand for access.



Stakeholders attended a public scoping meeting held in Elfin Cove on May 23, 2002.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

NPS used various methods to provide the public with information regarding the EIS and the scoping process. We distributed a scoping brochure, which provided information about the project and about opportunities for public involvement. It included a schedule of the scoping meetings in six Alaska communities and one in Seattle, Washington. We mailed the brochure to 755 addressees on our mailing list. We published meeting notice advertisements in the *Anchorage Daily News* and *Juneau Empire* on May 19, 2002, and in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* on May 23, 2002.

We also mailed flyers to all the communities where scoping meetings were held and to the harbor masters or port directors of the city or borough offices of Hoonah, Pelican, Juneau, Sitka, Petersburg, Ketchikan, Haines, and Yakutat. A copy of the flyer was also sent to Alaska Women's Environmental Network for their electronic announcement page.

We sent press releases and public service announcements via facsimile and electronic mail to newspapers and radio stations in Anchorage, Haines, Juneau, Ketchikan, Sitka, and Thorne Bay.

- The construction of a new visitor's center could change the intensity of use of certain park resources, such as the Bartlett Cove Dock.
- The number of charter boat operators is increasing, which could result in increased demand for permits.
- A fast ferry from Juneau could increase the number of visitors.
- The number of administrative vessels may increase.
- The park's zero discharge policy means that vessels are dumping their sanitary waste outside of the park.
- **kayak quotas and operating requirements**—this EIS addresses only motorized vessels. Kayak quotas and operating requirements will be addressed in the park's Backcountry Management Plan, which should be underway by the time this EIS is completed or shortly after; and
- **commercial fishing**—issues concerning commercial fishing have been addressed in the Commercial Fishing Compensation Plan and the Commercial Fishing Environmental Assessment.

Further analysis of scoping comments may result in additions to this list.

ISSUES AND ALTERNATIVES RAISED, THAT WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED IN THE EIS

The scope of the EIS is necessarily focused on motorized vessel use. Comments related to management of the following resources and/or topics are considered outside the scope of the Vessel Quotas and Operating Requirements EIS:

- **land-based activities;**
- **allocation of cruise, tour, or charter boat permits**—this will be addressed as part of a separate concessionaire prospectus and plan;
- **restrictions of or providing access to the backcountry (i.e., off-vessel areas)**—the park's Backcountry Management Plan will address where vessels can offload passengers and where they can land;

PARTICIPATION

A total of 83 persons attended the scoping meetings. We received more than 5,000 e-mail messages, postcards, and comment letters from federal and state agencies, tribal representatives, organizations, and private citizens. Comments were received from nearly all 50 states. We received comments from representatives of the Hoonah Indian Association Board, Gustavus Visitor's Association, Friends of Glacier Bay, National Parks and Conservation Association, the Ocean Conservancy, Southeast Alaska Conservation Council, University of Delaware's Marine Policy Program, Alaska Travel Industry Association, Alaska Center for the Environment, National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska Lands Act Coordinating Committee, State of Alaska, and the Sierra Club.

NEXT STEPS

Over the next few weeks, we will further analyze scoping comments to more finely focus the EIS as well as define the alternatives to be addressed. We will then evaluate and compare the effects of each alternative in a draft EIS, scheduled for completion and public distribution in February 2003. The draft EIS will be available for public review and comment for 60 days, subsequent to publication of a Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register*.

HOW TO STAY INVOLVED AND INFORMED

Please stay involved by reading the draft EIS when it becomes available and by providing your comments in writing or verbally at public hearings, which will take place in spring 2003. For additional information about the EIS process, or to obtain copies of this newsletter or the draft EIS, contact Nancy Swanton, EIS Project Manager, (907) 257-2651. You also can visit our website at <http://www.nps.gov/glba> where you can download a copy of this newsletter and other project information. We will post the scoping report and the draft EIS on our website when they become available, as well as a schedule of the public hearings for the draft EIS.

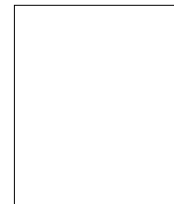


**Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve
Vessel Quotas and Operating Requirements EIS**

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